

Gen Z stare

The **Gen Z stare** is, according to *New York Times* writer Nicole Stock, what "many social media users have said is the blank stare that members of younger generations give in situations where a verbal response would be more common".^[1] Kalhan Rosenblatt of NBC News says, "[w]hile there are several definitions for the stare, the most common meaning is a vacant expression a Gen Zer gives in response to a question. The stare occurs in classrooms, restaurants, at work and more settings."^[2] It has garnered notice in the mainstream media in July of 2025.^{[1][3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10]}



A blank stare

Description

According to Dani Di Placido, writing for *Forbes*, some TikTok users believe that many members of Generation Z have difficulty with small talk and fundamental social courtesies. This is often described as a blank stare that they give to some questions that are asked. Placido also says that on TikTok, this stare is most common during customer service interactions.^[3] Similarly, servers and bartenders say that their Gen Z customers respond to pleasant questions or pleasant conversation with a long gaze or a "stare".^[3] It is as if they are uninterested in talking. Additionally, some TikTokers say that Gen Z employees do not greet customers or take care of basic requests, instead just giving them a blank stare.^[3]

In a 2025 *New York Times* article, one interviewee said that the attitude and stare indicate that "the customer is not always right", adding that the stare has both supporters and detractors.^[1] Even Generation Z-ers cannot seem to determine an exact definition.^[1]

The college classroom

When University of Alabama associate professor Jessica Maddox asks her students a question, she often experiences a blank look without expression in reply. She eventually learned that this behavior is called the "Gen Z stare". This stare is so common in her classroom that she sometimes has to somehow cajole the students to respond. Maddox, is an associate professor of digital media. When she heard the description of the Gen Z stare outside the classroom, she immediately recognized it and then realized it had a name.^[2]

Possible root causes

There are ideas about the possible root causes behind the Gen Z stare. The University of Alabama associate professor Maddox says that this look became more prevalent on campus after the Covid protocols. She noticed an "increasing amount of silence" after asking questions in her classroom after the pandemic.^[2]

What had happened was, social isolation during the pandemic led to increased mental health issues for many students, such as anxiety and depression. Since physical real-world interactions were scarce or sparse, Gen Z'ers used social media as a way to connect with others. Gen Z grew up with social media, which has influenced their skills of communication and interaction. Such influence has also led to a fear of being judged or "canceled" online. Not wanting to be "cringe" is additionally a common theme.^[2]

"Some experts say"^[2] that while people of each generation have challenged the older generations, the current blank stare may not be only an act of defiance. Instead, it might also be a reaction to social anxiety developed during the enforced isolation of the pandemic period.^[2]

Generational eccentricities

According to ABC News, differences in interactions with technology for each generation is not new. For instance, the millennial generation is known for the 'millennial pause,' a hesitation before recording a video to make sure the recording device is active. Similarly, Baby Boomers were known for ending text messages with a signature, as if writing a letter. These are examples of the distinguishing behaviors that occur within each generation.^[10]

Also, according to ABC News, the "Gen Z stare" has recently garnered notice. Whether this is a form of communication or merely a trend, it has gained significant attention on social media and caused a larger conversation about communication styles or quirks between the generations.^[10]

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External links

- *Describing the Gen Z stare* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaX4-0rcmgk>). NBC News. July 2025 – via YouTube.
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